

Proposed Statewide Largemouth Bass Regulation



Bass Regulation Review Process

- 2011 Black Bass Management Plan
- Need to review current and past regulations
- Bass Regulation Review Committee
Regional managers and researchers
- Review current bass regulations
Review biological data
Human Dimensions
- Start with “Statewide LMB”



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Bass Regulation Review Process Overview



Goals for Regulation Review Committee

- **Goal :**

Optimal sustainable use of Florida's bass fisheries with an emphasis on production of high quality and trophy bass

- **Desired Future Condition:**

Use the least restrictive regulations possible to protect trophy bass and maintain a statewide bass fishery with a healthy population that provides diverse angling opportunities, including controlled harvest and high angler satisfaction



Stakeholder Engagement Methods

Tell us what you think!



Largemouth Bass Regulation Survey




Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
Largemouth Bass Angler Survey

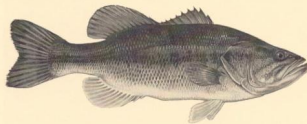
Introduction & consent



We have contacted you because you have an interest in freshwater fishing in the state of Florida. We are fisheries scientists at the University of Florida. As part of a research project, we are investigating stakeholder perspectives on fishing regulations and stocking practices for largemouth bass. We would like to invite you to participate in an online survey communicating your views on this matter. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey is entirely voluntary and responses will be kept anonymous. Your cooperation is extremely important to help make our investigation comprehensive, accurate, and timely. There are no "correct" or "incorrect" answers, so please express your true feelings.

Benefits from participating in this study include the opportunity to have your opinions heard and considered in future regulation design for black bass. There is no compensation for participation, but know that your participation is important. The survey is anonymous, be assured that in our analysis and recording of results your answers...

Largemouth Bass



Regulations Survey

Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com 05733

FWC Bass Regulation Survey

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recently adopted the Black Bass Management Plan (BBMP) to guide future management of black bass. The BBMP calls for a review of current bass regulations. A team of FWC biologists is reviewing regulations and working with stakeholders to determine angler desires and expectations. The first step of the regulation review process is a survey of freshwater anglers. Guided by survey results and fisheries data, the team will determine if regulatory changes are needed and develop a draft of new regulations, if warranted.

This is your opportunity to speak up. We need your input to ensure the success of quality black bass fishing in Florida.

- What species do you most often target in freshwater?
Largemouth bass Copeage Spotted seatrout Catfish Other
- In which bass regulation consult do you fish?
Northeast
Central and Southeast
South
- How many fishing tournaments do you participate in during a typical year?
0 1 2-5 6-10 10-15 15-20 more than 20
- How many fishing trips did you take in the past year?
- On average, how much money do you spend per fishing trip? Include fuel, bait, lures, food, tackle, etc.

Bass Regulations Open House

Tell us what you think!



March 18, 2013

Gary's Tackle Box—5721 NW 13th St, Gainesville, FL 32653

FWC Staff will be available from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Come by when you like and stay as long as you wish
Provide your thoughts and ideas about Florida largemouth bass regulations and whether or not changes are needed.

www.MyFWC.com/fishing/freshwater/black-bass/bass-regulations



Survey/Open House Results

- 5,608 Surveys Returned
- ~200 in person conversations
- Anglers are generally apathetic about bass regulations
- Not much variation across the state
- Show some preference for trophy bass



Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about recreational fishing in freshwater.												
Answer Options (%)	Str. disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Str. agree		Rating Average	
	Mail	Online	Mail	Online	Mail	Online	Mail	Online	Mail	Online		
The more bass I catch, the happier I am	1.9	4.0	4.4	31.6	7.0	4.4	31.6	7.0	4.4	31.6	4.24	
A fishing trip can be successful even if no bass are caught	6.2	9.1	17.6	39.9	27.2	3.73	1.94	4.24				
I usually eat the bass I catch	56.5	16.8	10.9	7.9	7.9	1.94	55	3.51	2.85	2.69		
A successful fishing trip is one in which many bass are caught	6.1	13.1	25.1	24.9	24.9	55	3.51	2.85	2.69	3.78	3.65	
I would rather catch 1 or 2 big bass than 10 smaller fish	6.7	2.2	16.8	15.5	29.2	31.0	25.1	31.9	19.2	19.5	3.36	3.51
When I go fishing, I am just as happy if I don't catch any bass	15.5	26.5	26.6	11.0	2.69							
It doesn't matter to me what type of fish I catch	22.2	27.9	19.4	19.5	11.0	2.69						
The bigger the bass I catch, the better the fishing trip	4.1	2.5	10.1	12.3	18.6	23.5	38.3	41.8	29.0	20.0	3.78	3.65
I'm just as happy if I don't keep the bass I catch	4.4	6.0	8.9	23.3	57.4	4.23						
I like to fish where there are several kinds of fish to catch	6.2	2.8	8.7	7.7	28.1	26.6	33.2	44.1	23.8	24.0	3.60	3.69
I want to keep all the bass I catch	64.9	21.7	7.3	2.8	3.2	1.58						
I'm happiest with the fishing trip if I catch a challenging game fish	3.4	6.1	24.2	42.0	24.4	3.78						
I'm just as happy if I release the bass I catch	3.9	4.7	7.9	22.0	61.4	4.32						
If I thought I wouldn't catch any bass, I wouldn't go fishing	30.7	23.2	26.7	28.3	15.1	14.6	14.4	21.6	13.1	12.2	2.53	2.70
I like to fish where I know I have a chance to catch a "trophy" bass	2.8	4.4	8.4	13.9	22.3	25.0	32.6	35.9	33.8	20.8	3.86	3.55



Biological Data

- Regional Data
- Lake Specific Data
- Long Term Monitoring Data
- Summary of FWC's tagging studies
($< 10\%$ harvest)
- Summary of LTM creel data with estimated harvest rates
(90% release rate, harvest 10%)
- Population model
Effect of different regulations on catch of all bass and trophy bass



Biological Conclusions

- Effects of bass regulations in FL typically small
masked by habitat or environmental changes



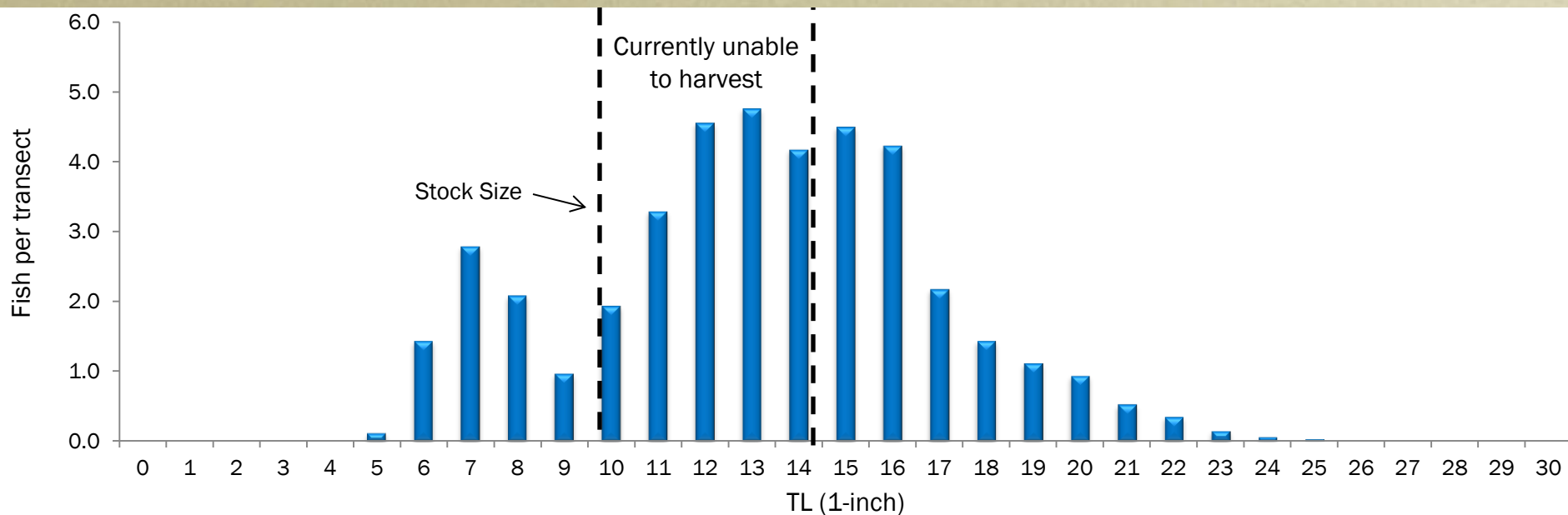
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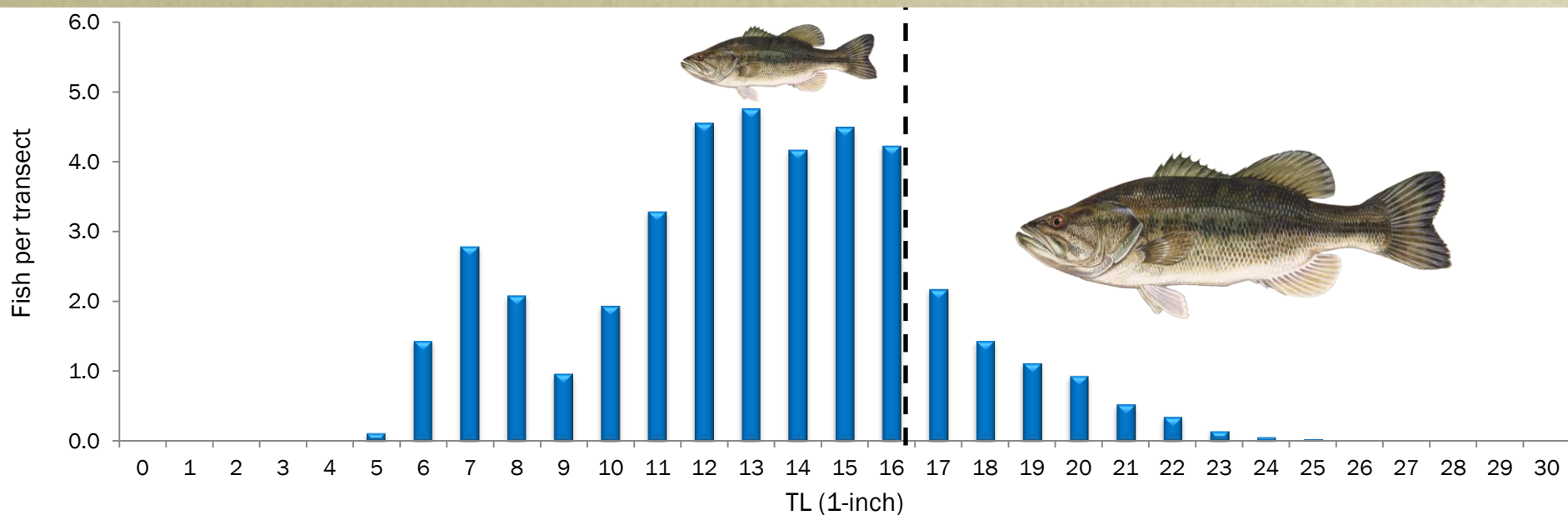
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- Potentially high harvest rates in few specific lakes
Candidates for special regulations



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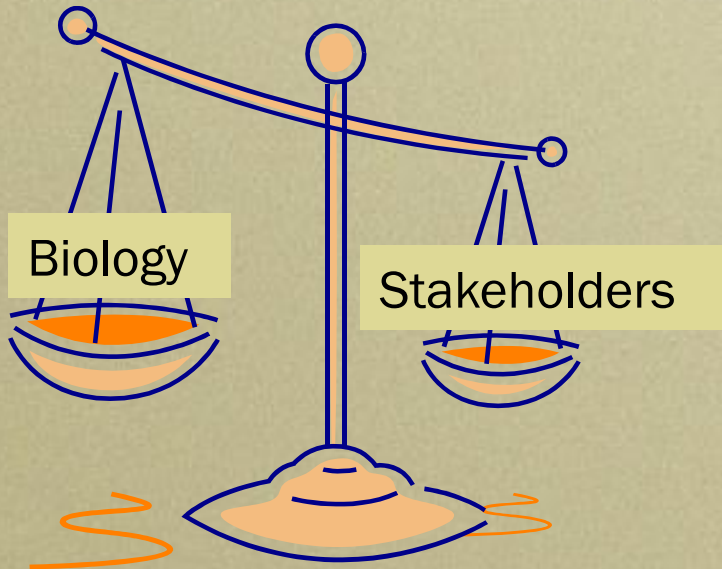
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Candidates for special regulations
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However, current results in lowest harvest and trophy catch
- ...but there's more to regulations than biology!





Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Bass Regulation Review Process Overview

FWC Regulation Review Committee Formed

Review current regulations and why they were put in place

Review biological data

Work with Human Dimensions expert
from UF to develop plan for public input

Prepare biological models
to test various regulations

Online survey

Decide on approp. biological options

Mail-in Survey and
Open House Events

Decide on recommended course of action
(keep current regulations or change them)

Collect public input about recommendation

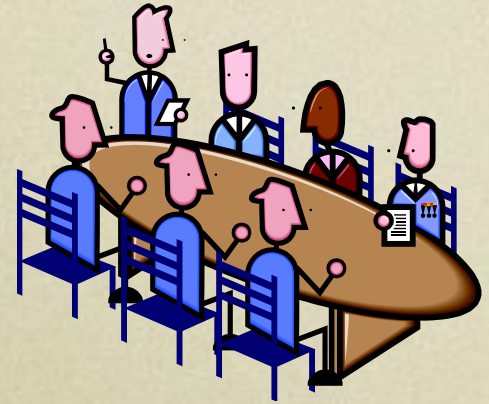
Adjust recommendation as needed

Final decision whether or not to change regulations

Begin process to change regulations if necessary


Committee Process


- Identified Target/Considerations
 - Biological
 - Social
 - Economical
- Check Goal and DFC against Considerations
- Regulations Options
 - List options
 - Open Discussion about which are realistic
 - Roundtable/Lobbying
- Developed recommendation for Divisional Leadership Team




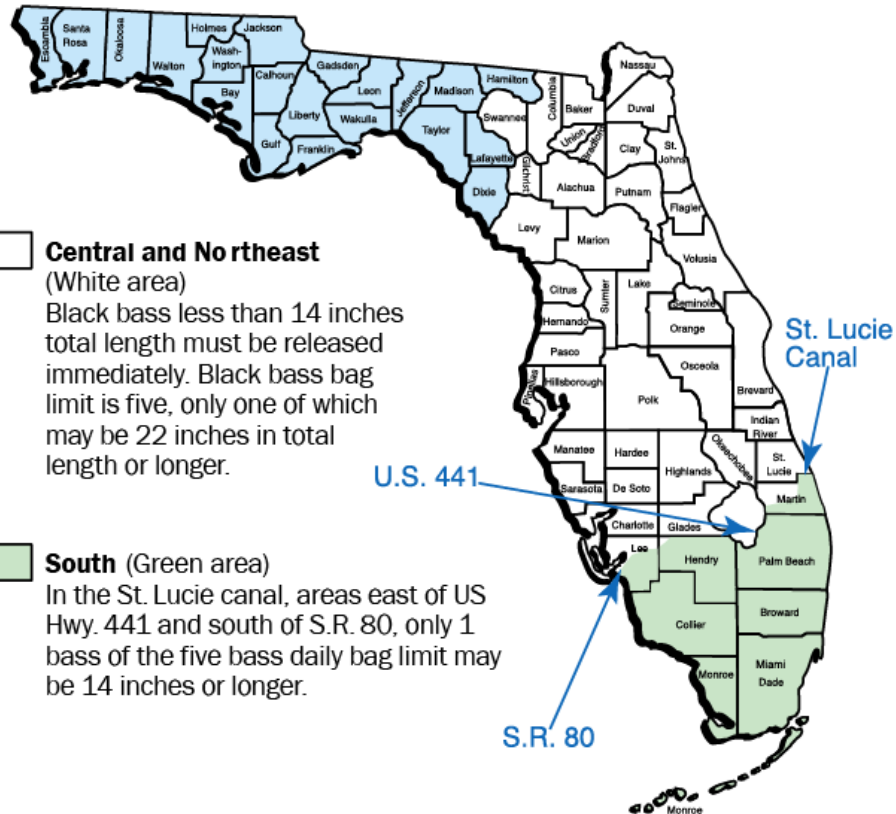
Current black bass regulations:

Black bass fishing zones

-  **Northwest** (Blue area. Waters north and west of the Suwannee River, including its tributaries). Black bass less than 12 inches total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer.

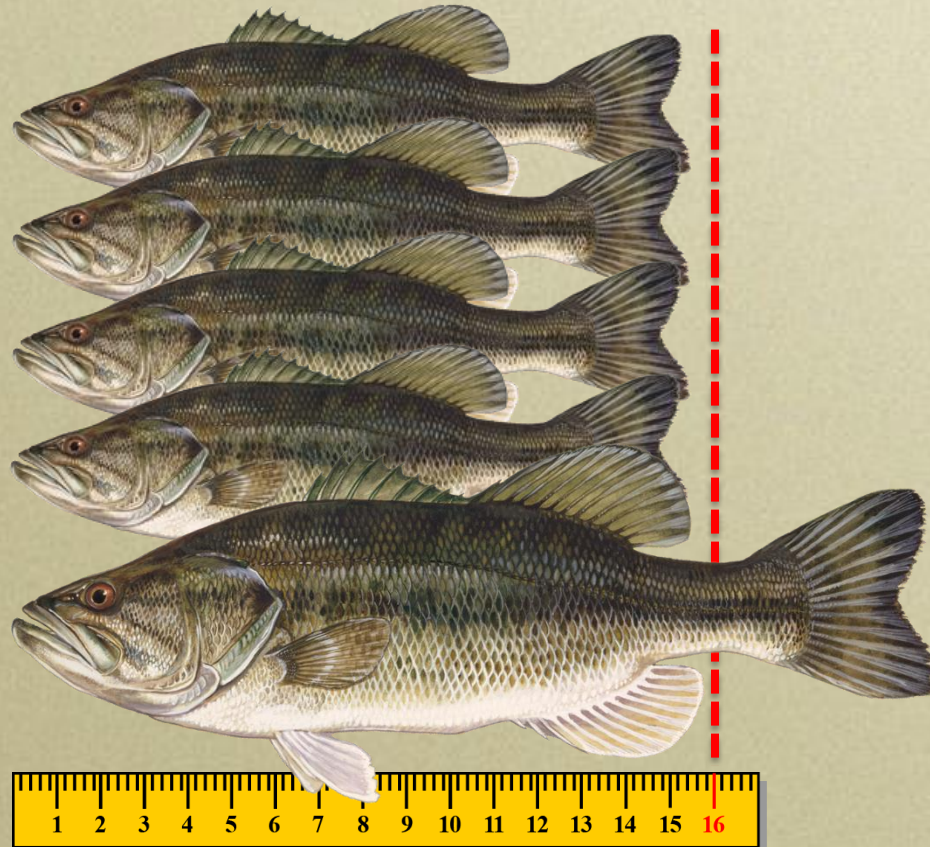
-  **Central and Northeast** (White area)
Black bass less than 14 inches total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer.

-  **South** (Green area)
In the St. Lucie canal, areas east of US Hwy. 441 and south of S.R. 80, only 1 bass of the five bass daily bag limit may be 14 inches or longer.



Proposed statewide largemouth bass regulation:

**“5 largemouth bass, only one of which
may be 16 inches or longer”**



**Most Special Regulations in the state would change
to the new statewide regulation**

Regulation Change by Region

Region	Change to New Statewide Regulation	No Change	Currently Evaluating	New Special Regulation
Northwest		Lake Seminole Joe Budd FMA	Lake Talquin	Perdido River (AL regs) Lake Jackson (Walton Co.; AL Regs)
NorthCentral	Lochloosa and Orange Lake FMA St. Augustine Rd FMA Baymeadows FMA Oceanway FMA Hannah Park FMA Pope Duval FMA Bethesda FMA Huguenot Pond FMA Crystal Springs FMA Ronnie Vanzant Park FMA Suwannee Lake FMA Montgomery Lake FMA Watertown FMA Lang Lake FMA	St. Mary's River		
Northeast	Secret Lake Lake Keenansville Lake Kerr	Turkey Lake Lake Underhill Shadow Bay Park Wildcat Lake Stick Marsh Jackson (Osceola Co.)	Lake Panasoffkee	
Southwest	Saddle Creek FMA Webb Lake Tenoroc FMA (Picnic and Fishhook lakes) Walsingham Park Lake Mosaic FMA—Haul Rd. Pit Hardee County Park (2,3,4) Istokpoga Weohyakapka	Gadsoen Park Pond Web Marl Pits 1, 2, 3 Tenoroc (all other) Mosaic FMA (all other) Hardee County Park (1)		
South Region	Okeeheelee FMA Plantation Heritage FMA Tropical FMA Lake Trafford Lake Okeechobee	Caloosa FMA		





Why Change it?


Current Regulation

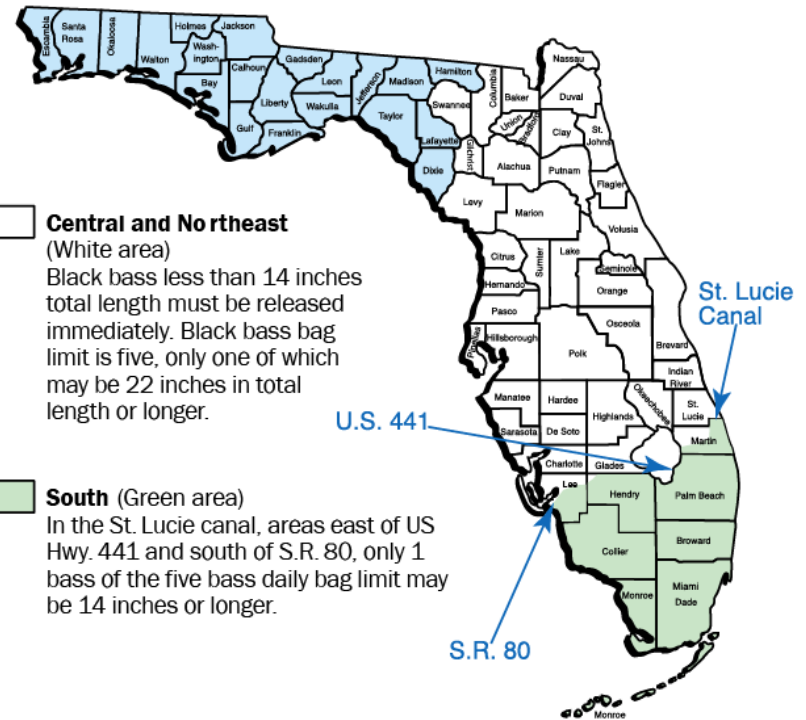
- Divided among 3 regions
- Restricts harvest of abundant fish
- Protects males and slow growing females
- Prefers for harvest of fast growing females
- Wrong message to anglers
 - Don't harvest little fish; they will become big fish
 - Harvest larger fish
- Modeling suggests worst regulation for harvest and catch of quality and trophy fish

Black bass fishing zones

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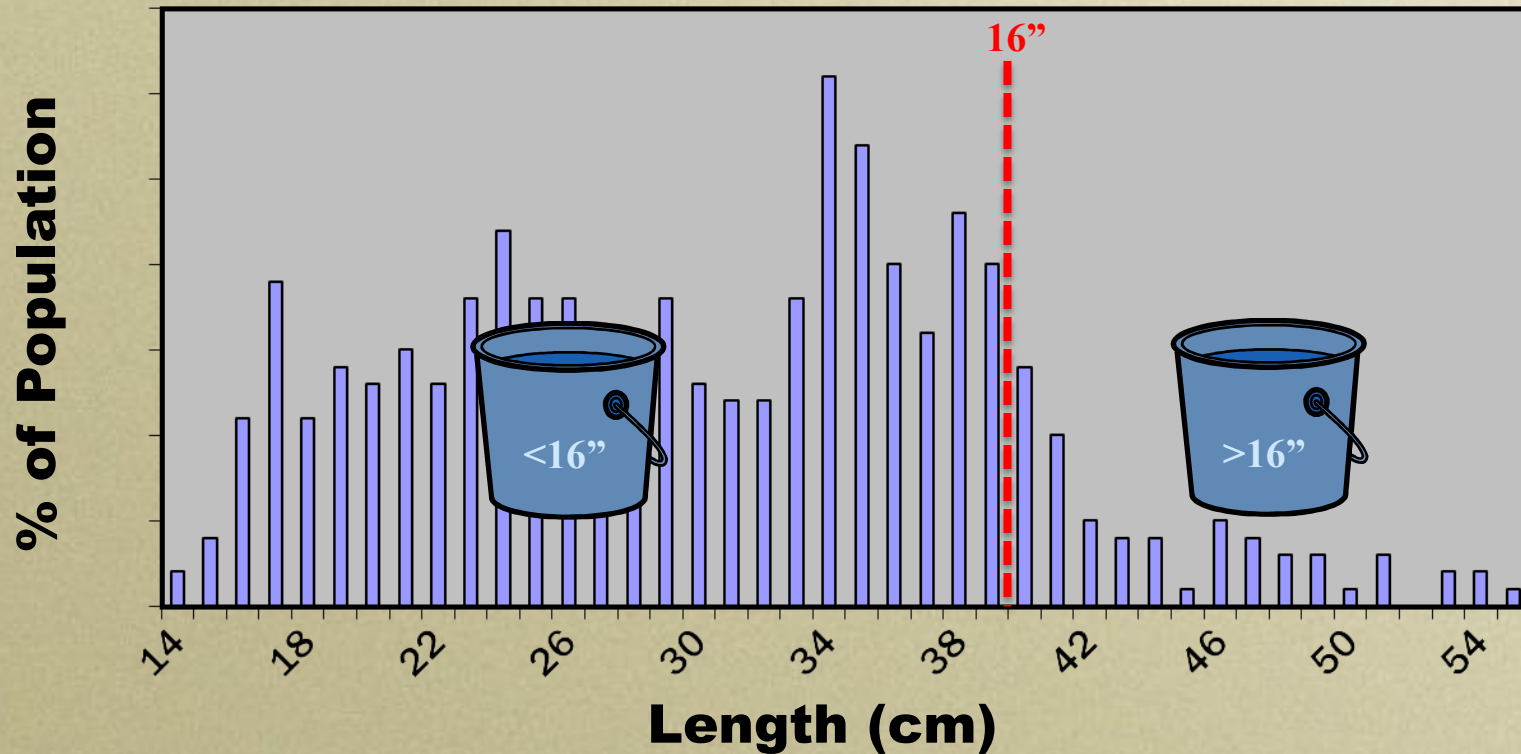
Proposed Regulation



- Regulations simplified
- Less restrictive – more opportunities
- Harvest M; protects fast growing F
- Could increase catch of quality and trophy fish
- Younger fish lower in mercury
- Keeping 5 fish bag satisfies anglers
- Change culture, promote value of trophy bass
- FWC 3 steps to managing for trophy bass:
 1. Keep smaller bass (<16");
 2. If you want to keep fish over 16", you can only keep one;
 3. We'll even pay you to release big fish (TrophyCatch)



Largemouth bass size distribution



Which “bucket” would you rather allow harvest from?



What's next in the process...

- Review “special regulations”
- Consider effects on other black bass species
- Collect public input on recommendation
- Final decision by Division Leadership Team
- Rule preparation
- Presentation to FWC Commissioners

If passed:

- New regulations in July 2016 or 2017???
- Education and outreach
- Evaluation



Questions?

